Discussion

Angela 2 — Week 6, Day 2, Session 5 — 88 minutes

Summary: Russell invites each voice into the group field and teaches that presence, not fixing, grows joy in ordinary moments. People share what is alive: radiance, healing, a finished book, beauty, an old injury, a new home. He responds on doubt, whole-body knowing, warmhearted light, and life-giving will.

Each voice

[Russell:] So much of what I value in the fabric we've created, and are creating together, is this way. I wrote about this a little bit. When a group mind is functioning the way that I hope it to function, it becomes that each person's discoveries become fruit for others. Even if it's about an issue, or something that you don't have much connection to, the way they engage in their truth-telling, or finding, or uncovering, affects the whole field.

Because of that, and also because I like, as you know, to have each voice feel like it's in the whole room, I want to take a little time for each of us to say something in the whole group. And I'll give you a little context for it.

The first thing is, you're welcome to say anything that you want to say, anything that you want to bring. So it's open. It'll be short, because there are other things I want to get to. Short.

You might also, if it feels right, just reflect on what is currently coming for you. What's coming alive. Either it's very alive and you're celebrating it, or you're sensing it coming and you're working with it. There might be some celebrating and some struggling. But what's living, what's occurring, that feels important.

And as you all know well, I often will ask you, is it okay if I comment? And it's really fine to say no. I don't get insulted. I really don't take that personally. It's a true question. It's not a throw-out line. So if you don't want interaction or comment, that's fine.

Sometimes what I find very valuable for the whole group mind is using what comes, and letting that guide us. And if I'm well enough in tune, that almost always helps to weave a fabric further, deepen it in some way, and get to the central themes that I'm open to work with this week.

No — I'll say no. Because if there's a feeling like, what I just said is, I don't want to hear more about it right now, and you're kind of putting up with it, I have a sense that that somehow doesn't weave in as well. I don't know how it works really, but I trust that.

The middle zone

[Russell:] And one of the things I've been learning about — and I guess it's good, because I've been teaching the same thing for forty years or something — is I get so much further and further. And I can't believe that I'm saying I'm further, because I thought I was complete, in a way, in

this. Trusting the awareness process. Trusting the process of bringing our good-hearted light to what's there.

I'm not saying that it fixes everything, or that it heals everything, but that it's reliable.

And I argue strongly, I would say, for not working on issues often.

No, what does that mean? I'm not saying I'm against it. I like sometimes going into things and being with them, doing a focusing process about something. I just usually call it a listening process, because I go deep and I listen. I work with something. So I'm not against that.

But in my everyday life, the way I find most effective is to do kind of like what we did this morning, but in different forms. I call forth what's in there. I let what's in there be seen and observed and welcomed. And not necessarily worked on.

I'm not looking for a solution. I'm looking for the light to do its own work. But I'm bringing that atmosphere to the inner world. And then occasionally it needs more engagement.

And this might be really just personal, but I find that other people who have taken it up, often it connects for them. That much of the time, our inner world doesn't even like our meddling. But it really appreciates our presence.

That's why that emphasis I placed early on, and it's so hard to get — it's not about fixing. It's not about curing. It really is a different atmosphere than therapy. And not that therapy's bad or wrong, and not that it doesn't have its place. And I don't want this taken as, well, never go there, or anything.

But it's really alive for me, how the psychological therapeutic culture that we live in is holding people back very often. It's also healing, liberating. I want to keep that on the table so I don't sound one-sided. But there's a certain culture or paradigm. Yeah, it came up a number of times today.

Can I share what you said at the table?

[Participant:] Yeah.

[Russell:] So you were mentioning, in the group, realizing that you were feeling something good inside. See if I get it right. If I don't, correct me. That you were feeling something good inside, with this space that was good, and there was a little temptation of looking for what's wrong. And then realized, no, it's okay to be in this good stuff, and feel on the outside that you could sense other stuff, but it wasn't compelling. That you could give yourself permission to be with what felt good. And that wasn't avoiding. It was living with what was good. Is that close enough?

[Participant:] Okay.

[Russell:] And I just so want to encourage us to value when we feel even pretty well. When we don't feel terrible. This doesn't work when you feel terrible. But when you feel okay to good, it's relatively easy to get from okay to good, to feel really good, and even blissful.

Relatively easy. And we all have limits, perhaps, on how far that goes. We're not all the same. But to move that up is something that our attention can do.

What I notice is that there are some states that are really challenging, and some states that are implicitly very fine. Those are kind of the bell curve. We all have a different percentage. But the majority of our life is in between there. Not great, okay, pretty good, good. In that ordinary realm.

It's not compellingly, urgently bad or difficult or challenging, and it's not just unconditionally fine. It's in that middle zone. And that's where I think a lot of the action is, for growing our joy in our life, growing our presence in our life.

As I was saying this morning, I think it's part of the miracle of attention, that it takes a little bit of extra attention to turn the ordinary into something more wonderful. And it's still ordinary from the world's point of view, but internally, for that period of time, it was really a moving, touching experience.

And then yesterday I got out of the car and I said to Linda — I'm terrible at plant names. So there's a plant we have that has these conical purple flowers, and they're all over. There are lots of them. And they're deep purple. Oh, she's not here. She would know.

And I got out of the car, and I've seen it many times a day for a long time, and I go, wow, look at that purple. And just giving it another ten seconds, it was really — it's not exaggerating to say a small bliss, occurring for a little while.

Now, that's occurring in the middle of, I've got a bunch of emails to write, and a bunch of this. I can remember a time when the tasks I would have to do would be carried like a backpack through the moments of getting out of the car. I'm not doing them yet, but they're living in me, and on me.

And then I realized that, oh my God, they can actually wait till I'm doing them. That it's not a requirement of my self-responsibility to my tasks to carry them when I'm getting out of the car.

Now that sounds silly, but it's really like that when I'm unconscious. And so then I started seeing that shifting of attention. Sometimes it gets captured. It's great when you have a garden and there are lots of things to capture. But sometimes it's a conscious shifting.

And for me, part of it is to notice when I'm carrying, or drawn to something that I'm not currently dealing with. And I'll say to my inner life, oh, thank you for the reminder. And then I'll take a moment to look. And look means to listen, to open, to see where's the blessing.

So my weighing is a reminder to open. When I feel like — at any moment, right now, if I focus my mind in a certain way, I could get into money challenges. I can get into real concerns about certain friends, and their health, and their relationships. I have maybe four or five. And then in terms of students right now, I could turn at almost any moment in my life towards something that is a weight.

And so I began to experience that there are so many moments in which not much is happening. It's not great and it's not terrible. And the default of many of us is to bring up the list, or to bring up the stuff that is incomplete, that is difficult. And so somehow we worm our way back into the difficulty, unless what happens to be just a blessed moment.

So we're waiting for this small percentage of moments that are implicitly wonderful, to rescue us from either feeling terrible, or being in the ordinary that brings us to the difficult. Do you get what I'm saying?

And so I see the big potential is in that mid-range. When you're in a really challenging state, well, then you need to do some work on it, probably. But in this mid zone, there's a lot of potential for movement.

And part of the way I cultivate that is the kind of attention I'm talking about. Another way is that other kind of attention, the frequency of pausing. What I call the presencing process. The frequency of pausing, inviting, listening with a hello to what's there. Just shining the light on the truth of what's living in there. And not biased towards the difficult, but not avoiding things that are challenging that come. Often not working on them, but just shining a light.

Okay, so why am I saying all this?

I'm inviting us to share anything you want to share. Anything that feels like it's what you want to say right now. And if it feels right, you can listen for what's coming right now. And that doesn't mean it's some heavy thing you're working on, but it could be. It could be something that's wonderful that's opening.

Yeah, that's probably enough.

When you feel it, when your popcorn comes forward — and I'm not necessarily going to want to say anything. And if you want me to say something, yes. But to hear from you would be great.

Radiance

[Participant:] What I came away from this with was just asking what was true for myself, and just being with that. And just as I went on, a little bit more would come, and a little bit more would come. And the shift that happened because of it is really joyful.

And I have a few examples of what's happened. I find them amazing.

So I was walking down the street, out for an evening stroll, and there was this gang of boys. There were maybe seven or eight of them walking towards me. And they sort of had that gang feel to them, kind of skateboards and scowling, trying to look tough like teenage boys will do.

As I walked past them, I pretty much looked all of them in the eyes. And as I'm in the middle of them, they're coming this way and I'm going that way, I say, "Hi, guys."

They didn't say anything. They just kept walking. But the miracle of it was, I can remember a time when I would have been so intimidated, and felt so unsafe and unsure about walking through the presence of this big gang of kids. And I was just amazed that it didn't happen. That I felt like there's nothing to be afraid of here. And this presence, this joyful presence that I have within myself — sharing it, whether it's received or not. But my sense was that it was received. They're all like, wait a minute, that's not what we were going for. We better get some tattoos, man.

So one of the things that I do often, almost always, is I smile at people. When I'm out, I just have this smile, and I see somebody and I give them this really genuine sort of smile, and I do that a lot.

So I'm at Disneyland. It's starting to get late. My feet are hurting me really bad. And I'm walking down the main street. There's this woman sitting on the side of the street, an older Asian woman. It's kind of hard to say, but she was a wise woman. She was older. And she smiled at me in that way that I smile at people. That just genuine, connecting, kind of open smile. And I thought, that is so great. To receive it from somebody. I was really touched by that. And that happened a couple

other times, and it felt like being shown what it's like to get that from someone. Not that I haven't ever gotten it before, but it really felt.

On the way down the Grapevine, going down into LA to see my daughter, who lives down there, and who has recently told me that she's going to stay there, go to college. And my hope was that she would come back to Oregon.

[Russell:] Oh, you know what? I'm loving your exuberance, and I'm loving how much you share. What you're doing is you're sharing your radiance with us and the world, and I'm so grateful for that. It's like there's another light on in the world, and it's beautiful. So thank you so much. And just for time, we're going to need to make it a little bit shorter. Go ahead. I want to hear this one. I don't want to miss out on the rest of this one.

[Participant:] So I'm going down. It's smoggy, and there's all this traffic, and I'm starting to go into this old feel of panic and overwhelmed and stressed out, and just disgusted that she was living in all of this. She's living in the smog and all these people, and how could she do that? And I could feel myself going into this place of thought.

And so I — what can I be grateful for? So I started doing this. I'm grateful for my son, grateful she's graduating, we're getting to go to Disney. So I started to do the happy thing, and I was able to pull myself out of where I was going. Which to me is a miracle, that I even know, that I'm even aware that I have a choice. That I can be here or here.

The question that came up from that, from what you were talking about this morning, and you sort of answered it, is — do I go into that, or is there this pushing away, and not welcoming this place that's within me, by doing this gratitude? It brings me up out of it, and I don't have to deal with it. I did that a lot, because if I get overwhelmed or stressed, it's like, oh, I don't want to feel that, so how can I get out of that? So am I escaping, and not welcoming this place, or is that okay? Because I'd much rather do the whole gratitude thing and sweep myself out of it, rather than get stuck in there.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant:] That was my wondering this morning. That stuff is kind of still in there.

[Russell:] Yeah. To see all that, and how to be with that.

So it's great you recognize, oh, there is the possibility of using these skills, turning them into techniques for avoidance. That becomes a possibility. There is a possibility of getting lost in habitual old states. Neither of those feels just right. And to investigate, well, what other possibilities do I have? Great.

So I recommend spending some time with that more over these days.

[Participant:] What did you ask?

[Russell:] Yeah, to investigate the more, because from my hearing, that's really the edge. You've learned wonderfully how you don't have to be the victim of old states. And now the next layering is, well, yeah, that's great. And I know avoidance is a possibility, or pushing away is a possibility. And something about that doesn't feel just right. So what's the higher octave? We're moving up octaves.

What's the higher octave that includes the recognition of pollution and concern and ideas about my daughter, and includes this radiant joy? And how do I have the space for all that, and how does that want to express itself?

So my experience of the unfolding process is this. There's always the next more that gets included, which raises to the next octave. And so then it's a similar thing at a higher level, that's including more of life in it.

[Participant:] Thank you.

[Russell:] Yeah. Good.

Coming back

[Participant:] Just some announcements. One is that tomorrow, most of Sunday, for my son's graduation. Really important that I do.

Two more announcements. One, I don't know if you knew, but I had a back operation since our last meeting. And it cured all my back problems.

[Russell:] Well, let's not get into it. That's better dinner conversation.

[Participant:] They removed the cysts that had been impinging on the spinal column and caused this stenosis, which caused nerve damage to my leg. So my leg will also recover. This is all good.

The second thing having to do with health is, I got hep C from an IV in a clinic in 2008. I'm going to start the cure for hep C in a week. Ninety-five percent cure rate. No side effects. In fact, for my subgroup, it's one hundred percent. But I don't want to push. I don't want to expect too much.

[Russell:] Wow. I didn't know about the cure. Right.

[Participant:] So that's important, and it's just an overall sense of my coming back, and a growing sense somehow.

[Russell:] You're flourishing.

[Participant:] Yeah. My body.

[Russell:] And I just want to affirm that that flourishing in your body — I'm not talking causality, but in my experience it was preceded by a certain inner flourishing, and a way of being with some of those old heavy places. And that's very interesting. The lightening, and the flourishing.

[Participant:] So, just to make a brief remark as to the inner flourishing. Somewhere like yourself, there's been a diminishing of the basic fear response. The situation, the wounds. There's an ongoing growth, almost a motherly attentiveness, through myself, my conditioned self. Awareness, and interest. And so the sense of struggle is disappearing. The conflict isn't gone. Not disappearing, but —

So finally, in these last three, four months, my life is having this organic, daily — it's been okay. Everything I do is kind of part of this. And a lot of that is stress. A lot of that is something coming up and going, you don't really want to do that, do you? And I don't know that I don't really want to do it, because of the stress, and I have to deal with it. But then it reveals itself. And it's been wonderful.

And so, two months ago, in Oregon, I met a woman whom I was deeply in love with forty years ago. And she with me. But I was married, and so we couldn't be together. And we haven't seen or talked to each other for thirty years, and then here we were, and we met each other in art. And it was — is that you?

And we're both free now, and immediately, if the word soulmate comes to mind, because there's that sense of someone who comes all the way in.

So it's going to upset my life. So I need so much — moving down in August. And then I notice all these things starting to come up. Can I live with somebody? Can I live with anybody? And I give up my separate life? All these parts of myself that tend to clump on, and merge, they start to come up.

And the thing I just realized here is, it's not so much a question of accommodation between us. It's me getting more clear on what's coming up with myself. That makes sense? Because it's really very vague. It's very uncharted. It's very exciting. Totally exciting. It's a sense of a whole new chapter, with possibilities. A sense of new possibilities. And yet there's just a feeling of fear. Unresolved. No sense of hesitation.

[Russell:] Great.

[Participant:] But it's all wrong.

[Russell:] Yeah. It's real unknown. It's beautiful. Thank you.

[Participant:] Thank you. It's risky.

[Russell:] We want to go downhill also. Sometimes.

Not holding the jackhammer

[Participant:] And I can be very brief, because both episodes relate to the same Wednesday morning Feldenkrais class that I take, and I've been taking for about a year now.

About two months ago, we were in this class. Most of the time there were three or four students, and this time there were only two students and the teacher, and a jackhammer across the street. And the teacher offered to cancel the class, and the other student and I said, oh no, we can handle this. We can live with the jackhammer across the street.

And as soon as I lay down on my mat, I was so grateful. This real sense of gratitude that, first of all, I wasn't holding the jackhammer and crying on the mat. That I wasn't trying to pass the bar exam, like someone had when they were jackhammering outside his school. And it was such a revelation. I never heard the jackhammer throughout the lesson.

And then the same Wednesday morning class, months later — as a matter of fact, it was the day before yesterday — the teacher said to me, oh, so you're going to your last week of training? And I said yes. And this is Sarah. And the other three students said, oh, you're in the training? What are you learning? Are you going to be a teacher? And I said no. And then Sarah kind of explained what the program was like. And we said, well, we want to be your students. When you come back, you can practice with us.

And I was so touched by this, because I would really love to do focusing. And it has been almost like a struggle, trying to find somebody who's willing to go through it. So now I have three, maybe even four, including the teacher, who are interested in doing some form of focusing. So this was my downhill story.

[Russell:] Just that moment when you said, grateful for not holding the jackhammer. That really went in. It's not all about me. And how often we can get — just that little and huge turn. What's it like for them? Makes it so different in here.

Thank you for that. That one will. You're a good model.

Acknowledgments

[Participant:] So I wrote a novel, and I'm going to sell it. Ten days. But I have one galley. And just this week I finished it up. The proofing, for the final time.

And I wrote acknowledgments. That was part of the question — where you put them. So I have a title page, a table of contents, a page in chapter one, and then paper, and acknowledgments. I just want to thank a lot of people.

[Russell:] What's the title?

[Participant:] The title is Two Half Brothers Are Separating Out.

[Russell:] Two Half Brothers Are Separating Out.

[Participant:] And when I finished writing them, I realized something. Somehow there was another paragraph. So.

In recent years, I have been fortunate to study within the San Francisco Bay Area nonviolent communication community, and Russell Delman's Embodied Life school. Both have contributed immeasurably to a lifetime of learning that is only now uniquely connected, and free to make twists that can give most generously and wholeheartedly. I offer my last but not least expression of gratitude. R. L., W. S.

And besides wanting to share the book with you, I realized that I just couldn't finish this, for me, huge project without acknowledging how much your love —

[Russell:] Thank you.

[Participant:] Thank you.

[Silence 2 minutes]

Leave-taking

[Russell:] And it's so wonderful. It's like Moshe would say, you want to surprise everybody, order dessert first. And to have the thank you and acknowledgement on our first day feels so complete.

Something about that feels — when you say leave-taking, I take something from that for my inner life. I'm not sure what it is yet, but there's something about it.

It's like a friend who's ninety years old this summer, and has been spending time in a coffin so that he doesn't get scared. And I think that's incredible. He wants to get comfortable in all phases.

And having your memorial service before you die is kind of a good idea, so you can be there. But there's something about, how do we leave? I'm not saying that that's the way to do it. I'm just saying, this leave-taking touches me. And somehow you manifesting it in a completion of a book, and the very end of the book is thanking us for the whole process we've been through, and now we have the week to go through. And there's something about not hearing that on the last day that I'm appreciating.

[Participant:] Yeah.

[Russell:] Something in that. Thank you.

[Participant:] Yes. Thank you.

[Silence 2 minutes]

[Silence 2 minutes]

[Participant:] Thank you.

The right place of doubt

[Russell:] The teeny bit of warning is this work with doubt. I encourage you to include the value of doubt when it's in the right place. Maybe especially as an Eight, but I don't speak so much Enneagram language. That there is a healthy doubt that, when it's not dominant, but it knows that it has a place, then it trusts you more.

But you see, when doubt is kind of too strong, or it prevents something — we don't want to then go, oh, doubt's the problem. Doubt's not the problem. Just like every state has its place. It's a question of where is it living in us?

And to find the right place of doubt. We want to have that place that keeps us from being gullible in a way that's not life-giving, that keeps us questioning, keeps us asking. So that's the right place of doubt. And when working on something like doubt, I suggest not to approach it with the idea of getting rid of it, but to approach it with the idea of it finding its right place in the multitude of inner life. The multitude of beings that inhabit us, that help us to be whole.

And so then it's like, well, how does that happen? How do I find that? And what's it feel like when that is more in the background?

No solutions. Just a direction.

[Participant:] Yeah.

Beauty

[Russell:] Yes, please.

[Participant:] Someone asked us to listen, and I touched in with beauty. Beauty was my access. I don't know. I'm making this all up right here. But there's a sense of what it is. It's beauty, somehow, brings me home. The everything. It's not just here. It's something, and there's a connectedness to everything.

And what I notice, as I look back over the notes, and look at what we've been working with — in that moment when I'm looking at it, it's very present for me, but then it's gone. And what I know is that it's not there, but it's there.

And I know I always talk about marimba, but it's like, for me, I can learn a song now. We don't have music or anything. I just hear it. And it's not there. But then I find myself with it, and it's there. And something about all of this feels like — and the beauty of the flowers is really what — somehow I'm connected in a way I've never been. No, it's not different. I remember, very young, having this. It's different now, but I remember something similar. Growing, I have that sense. And I seem to be taking the world in, and living in the world.

Thank you.

[Russell:] It's a beautiful teaching from Gautama Buddha that goes, when you row the boat to the other shore, don't keep carrying the boat.

And what does that mean? It means that when a practice enters you, you don't have to think about it. It's only when we identify self as up here that we go, oh, I forgot that, I forgot that. And I haven't thought about that in a long time.

But what I want to encourage is that whole-body knowing. And we begin to find our larger identity, all through here, and we begin to get trust in that kind of knowing.

And then the memory, going through the notes, reminds this of some things that have gone quiescent in there, and then they kind of plump up, or light up. Do you get what I'm saying?

So this becomes a reminder that this is all here, but it's not supposed to stay up here. Like you might not have thought of the elephant in a long time. But for some of us, there's something living in there, and then if we lose it, that image may come back and inform us.

And there are many things like that, that we've touched on, that we can describe in words, but the question is, can we get to the felt sense of it? How it's living in there.

How is your foot? Were they kind?

[Participant:] Oh.

[Russell:] Oh, I'm glad. You're all right.

[Participant:] Yes. Thank you.

[Russell:] Thank you. I believe you.

So we're spending some time, just briefly, each person. It can be anything that you want to bring to the group, or it can be a reflection on what's alive, that feels like it's coming right now, or you're grateful for, or it's a next, or it's an edge. But you're free to say anything. We're bringing each voice in the room, and there's sometimes some interaction around it, sometimes not. That's what's happening.

What I'd like to do is get a few more people speaking, then I want to interrupt it with some movement, and then I want to come back. So the next session of that movement lesson will be, again, not a whole lesson, the next segment of it, and so we have time to come back to some sitting together.

So, next people. Yes, please.

An injury opening

[Participant:] What's been unfolding over these three years together. I think it was our second week when we started working with Golden Ball. That brought up something that was, and is, an injury in me. I've been working with this SI joint pain for a couple of years now, and doing everything I know to do. Drop in, get present, drop in deeper, work with movement, unwind, you name it.

And then gradually realizing that there's an emotional component to this that I'm just not getting to. So I'm on the verge, every other day, trying to get to this thing. I can't get to it, so what am I supposed to do? Can I just be with this?

And then one day, a few months ago — this relates to the question you called out earlier, about not developing a negative. I had this incredible negative place that came up. It's very unusual for me. I just went into this deep place of depression, triggered by something kind of innocuous. And I thought, okay, I'm just going to try to be with this in this moment. And I stayed really present, and I could tell something was changing, but I didn't really know what.

And then that night, at three in the morning, I woke up and there was all this energy moving in my pelvis, through the right side of my sacrum. And there were all these old memories that finally were coming up. And it wasn't even anything devastating that I didn't know about. It was more just preverbal reality.

So the next day, my pain was gone. It's still talking to me. But what was so amazing — within the next forty-eight hours, I had moved. Now it's kind of touching a little bit, so I just need to keep doing this. Dropping in, dropping in. And when the next layer of memory is not ready — and I've been doing a lot of asking for help through it, just like in meditation.

Today I have this sensation. My heart is a baby.

[Russell:] Just pause there a second, and take in that picture, if it resonates with you. And we'll let it be there. Anyone else who connects with this rocking pelvis, supporting this baby, this innocent heart being.

[Silence 2 minutes]

[Participant:] Feels like it must. It wants to move. It doesn't want to be embedded.

[Russell:] That's right. Yes. Thank you.

So, let me underline this. If in my speaking I gave an impression that shining the light, and being with the difficult places, was somehow not a good thing — that's not at all what I was trying to imply. Of course I want to do that.

I'm just talking about when that becomes a kind of, okay, there's nothing much going on, what can I work on, becomes one's true north, one's guiding light. That's what I was speaking to.

Because the healing — again, like I was saying before, I am just so floored by the healing capacity of our loving heart and our clear awareness, living together. The light has those two qualities, warmth and clarity. Sees what's there, and it stays there. Gives it space, and stays there.

And as we experience — and it was pointed towards also — this discovery that, oh, there's this spontaneous warmheartedness that's just there, at times. It's like we start experiencing this larger sense of self with whatever is occurring. And it has the feeling of, I am with you. I am for you. I am in you, and you are in me.

And when that energy can be with some stuck place, or some hurting place, then I say, let that energy work. And often just visiting it, shining a little light, then going away from it, visiting it some more. And then sometimes it'll call you in the middle of the night, and it's saying, okay, here's a time to really stay with this. Or now it's going to take some other times, cultivating the light.

I'm very conscious of how people solidify problems, often through working on them. And it's almost like, as this piece gets clarified, the problem is getting more solid at the same time, sometimes.

That's what Feldenkrais — his big thing about willpower was, when you practice something through will, you practice your insecurity about it, your inability, your sense of incapacity in that domain, at the same time.

So I would argue that there is a use of will that can be life-giving and effective, but we want to be very conscious, because it's very easy for willpower to become an affirmation of one's inability. And that's why you see so many New Year's resolutions lead into gallons of ice cream instead of quarts. Because it's almost like the stretch reflex after the willpower. You've empowered that whole, I'm going to be over this, I'm going to be over this, and the tiger springs forward.

So, learning how to be with these places. Exciting. Thank you.

Weariness and will

[Participant:] It might be a good time for me to share that I'm a little confused by what you just said, because what I've been doing here is trying to summon up the willpower to talk.

In my experience here with the group, I've focused about it. When I send you something —

So I guess I am acknowledging that part of me that was sitting here, trying to figure out when to step in, and not be so nervous.

And what I really want to share with you, because it's hot off the press, is — well, it was interesting to hear about the jackhammer. Because for four months now, I've been waking up in my new Desert Rain home to nail guns, skill saws, compressors, loud music, men yelling at each other. It's a construction zone still, and it's there every day. And I'm weary, so I want to hold that part of me as well. Because somehow there's a part of me that thinks it's not okay to be weary. Stay strong, keep the will, complete this challenge. And I will. I know that. I must die — something happens, but —

So I appreciate what you said. A couple of the guys don't wear shirts, and they're not even good looking, and it's just a huge structure. I mean, it's like a penis. I'm just like, God, it's huge. And I just don't find it to be necessary, but it's heavy.

So we have three water systems with our Desert Rain home. There's the rainwater, which we get nine inches a year, and half of it is from snow. And that's what all of our water comes from in the downtown city area. We have gray water, which goes through what's called a constructed wetland

bioreactor, comes out pristine, and we use that to water our land, which has never been done in the state of Oregon, in a city limit. And then the last challenge is the black water. And four months ago, the city approved our black water system. So we have major systems going on. And now they're building that structure.

And I wanted to share something. I'm deeply happy in my home. It is so beautiful. It is so warm. It is so spiritual. It's all LED lighting, and it's reclaimed wood. I've been really waiting for the right time to put the logo of Desert Rain home on me. So I now have a new tattoo.

[Russell:] And you know what just went outside? Your nervousness.

[Participant:] Okay. No, no, no. Oh, that's refreshing. Drink it for everybody.

There are two hundred registered in the most recent bridge. And so it's going. And I just feel really — come visit anytime. We have plenty of room.

[Russell:] Thank you.

[Participant:] Thank you.

[Russell:] And so it becomes a great question. What is effective will? What is will that's ineffective? What kind of distinctions do we want to make?

What is the difference between maintaining an intention, and the negative side of willpower? How would we distinguish those as an inner experience?

What's the difference between having a real commitment to something, and standing up for that, and the compulsive side of willpower?

And these are great distinctions to make in our life. Because, again, every quality has its life-giving way, and its unhelpful way. And those distinctions are known in us, because we've had models of all those, and we even experience them, at least a little bit.

And when we find one of our edges — I know the positive ways the term willpower has been used. I can kind of get what you mean by Feldenkrais's emphasis on how it can be destructive, to focus in a way that creates so much tension around it that you're actually growing the thing you're fighting against at the same time. Your monster is growing as your strength is growing. And so what else could I do?

Well, Feldenkrais would also say, and it's a good example of it, when you have two possibilities, you don't have a choice. Two possibilities is not a choice, because if you don't do one, you have to do the other. Choice arises at the third possibility, and at the fourth, and at the fifth. That's why often we do all these movements in unusual ways, because two is not a true choice. We haven't entered humanity. A reflex is on or off. The light goes on or off. But how do we work with the subtleties? What it feels like. Feel into the life-giving aspects.

That's why it's so helpful to learn this deep listening. And this is something we've got to get to a few times this week. Not to be confused by what Gene would call the public language, or ordinary language. Not to be confused, or seduced, or go numb with the language we ordinarily use, which doesn't open the wisdom that's living inside.

So we want to ask again, what kind of willpower is this? How is it manifesting? And what distinctions can I make in there? What's it feel like when I positively face a challenging moment, and lift myself up, and it feels difficult, but it feels somehow, at least subtly, different than when I force myself. Or we could call it a violent way. The inner sense of, I'll hate you if you don't do this.

We have time for you.

[Participant:] Yeah. That's good.

[Silence 50 seconds]

[Russell:] Yes. Right direction. Little by little. Thank you.

Okay, ten minutes for the bathroom. You can set up for some movement. The movement will start sitting, and then we'll lie down.